



**RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE**

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

WELFARE REFORM EVALUATION PROJECT
Study of welfare reform and Rhode Island's beneficiaries

**WORKING PAPER: A brief look at a representative sample of Rhode Island FIP
beneficiaries: Families with a child(ren) with disabilities**

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Overview:

A total of 638 current and former Family Independence Program (FIP) beneficiaries are included in this five-year longitudinal study. This is a representative sample of 3.4 percent of all FIP participants at the time the program was first implemented. Baseline interviews and electronic case record reviews were conducted during the period of February 1998 through October 1999. All study participants were receiving FIP at the time of their baseline interviews. This was a requirement for participation in the study. Interviews for the final year of the study were conducted during the period of July 2001 through October 2002.

During the final interview for this longitudinal study, FIP beneficiaries were asked a question about the well-being of their children under the age of 18. The question asked if their children had any of a list of ten possible issues. The following issues: mental health, short-term health issues, chronic illness, learning disability, and developmental disability were combined into a new variable that was derived by identifying those families who indicated that they had at least one child with one or more of the five possible issues noted above. The other five issues not included in this analysis are behavioral problems, academic issues, school attendance issues, criminal/juvenile justice involvement, and drug/alcohol issues. These items were omitted because they were not considered to be disabilities. It could be argued that short-term illness might not qualify under our derived "disability" variable; there were 12 cases that reported a short-term illness that did not also check one of the other four items that were included in our derived "disability" variable. Because this variable was created after the study was completed, caution should be used in interpreting the findings using this derived variable.

The following is a brief analysis comparing families who were identified as having a child(ren) with a disability (based on the combined responses noted above) in comparison to families who did not meet these criteria.

Families of children with disabilities

As can be seen below in Table 1 below, more than half of the families (55.6%; 207 out of 383) were categorized as having a child under the age of 18 with at least one of the items that were considered in this study to be a potential disability.

Table 1
Families of Children with Disabilities

	Frequency	Percent
No	165	44.4
Yes	207	55.6
Total	372	100.0

FIP status at five-year mark

There was no statistical significant correlation ($p>0.30$) between having a child(ren) with disabilities and those who did not in relationship to whether or not they were receiving FIP at the time of the final interview. Approximately one-fourth of all study participants (24.7%; $n=92$) remained on FIP for the entire five-year period. Another one-quarter of the sample (25.8%; $n=96$) were receiving FIP at the five-year mark but had been off FIP at least once during the five year period. Almost half of all participants (49.5%; $n = 184$) were off FIP at the time of their final interview (See Table 2).

Table 2
Participants' FIP history over the period of the study and FIP Status at final interview

		Children with Disabilities		Total
		No	Yes	
FIP status at 5 years after baseline	Stayer: Remained on FIP throughout study	38 23.0%	54 26.1%	92 24.7%
	Cycler: On FIP at time 5; Off FIP at least once during 5 year period	40 24.2%	56 27.1%	96 25.8%
	Leaver: Off FIP at final interview *	87 52.7%	97 46.9%	184 49.5%
Total		165 100.0%	207 100.0%	372 100.0%

Pearson's R = -.054, $p>.301$

*may have cycled during period of study

Employment

As can be seen in Table 3 below, there is a statistically significant correlation between employment status at the five-year mark and whether or not study participants had a child with a disability ($p < 0.04$). Families with a child(ren) with a disability were significantly less likely to be employed (45.4%) than those with no children with a disability (56.4%).

Table 3

Employment Status: Comparison between families with and without children with disabilities

		Children with Disabilities		Total
		No	Yes	
Employment Status at Final Interview	Not Employed	72 43.6%	113 54.6%	185 49.7%
	Employed	93 56.4%	94 45.4%	187 50.3%
Total		165 100.0%	207 100.0%	372 100.0%

Pearson's R= -.109 $p < 0.036$

There was also a statically significant correlation between families with disabled children and problems with missing work, education or training. Participants were asked if they had missed work in the last 12 months due to the needs of their children, and if so, did this create a problem with their work or education program. Respondents who reported a child with a disability were significantly more likely to say that they had problems with missed work or education due to the needs of their children (38.6%) compared to those with no child with disabilities (16.9%).

Table 4

Problems with missing work or Education due to needs of child

		Children with Disabilities		Total
		No	Yes	
Problems with missing work or Education due to needs of child	No	49 83.1%	54 61.4%	103 70.1%
	Yes	10 16.9%	34 38.6%	44 29.9%
Total		59 100.0%	88 100.0%	147 100.0%

Pearson's R= .232, $p < .005$

Levels of confidence about employment

Study participants who were not employed at the five-year mark were asked about their confidence levels for getting a job. There was no correlation between the families with children with disabilities and those without children with a disability on this item ($p > 0.04$).

Additionally, all study participants were asked, regardless of their employment status, their level of confidence that they would be able to get a job (or that their current job) would adequately support their family. There was a statistically significant correlation between the two groups on this item ($p < 0.04$). Families who reported children with disabilities were significantly less confident that they would be able to get a job (or that their current job) would adequately support their family in comparison to those who did not report a child with a disability (see Table 5 below).

Table 5
CONFIDENCE THAT JOB WILL SUPPORT FAMILY

		Children with Disabilities		Total
		No	Yes	
CONFIDENCE THAT JOB WILL SUPPORT FAMILY	VERY CONFIDENT	32 34.4%	32 22.5%	64 27.2%
	SOMEWHAT CONFIDENT	31 33.3%	44 31.0%	75 31.9%
	SOMEWHAT DOUBTFUL	17 18.3%	44 31.0%	61 26.0%
	VERY DOUBTFUL	13 14.0%	22 15.5%	35 14.9%
Total		93 100.0%	142 100.0%	235 100.0%

Pearson's $R = .132$, $p < .043$

Resources needed to help obtain a job

All participants who were not employed at the five-year mark were asked, in an open-ended question, what resources they thought might help them in obtaining employment. Table 6 on the following page summarizes the responses from families with children with disabilities on this item. Most surprising is that only one person reported that their child's health needed to improve (1.6%) and no one mentioned that they needed resources, other than child care, related to their children.

Table 6

Resources needed to help obtain a job

Resource Needed	n	Percent
Education and Training	31	50%
Job Search Activities	11	17.7%
Transportation	8	12.9%
Child Care (Affordable/Non-Traditional hours)	7	11.3%
Housing	2	3.2%
Child's health needs to improve	1	1.6%
Better paying job	1	1.6%
Own health needs to improve	1	1.6%
Total	62	99.9%

Financial situation

The findings related to families' financial situation were mixed. There were no statistically significant differences between families with and without a child with a disability when hourly wage from employment (mean = \$9.08) or total household income (\$1,478.15 with food stamps; \$1,341.81 without food stamps) were compared. There was, however, a statistically significant difference when non-wage income was compared between the two groups ($p < .000$). Those families who had a child with a disability had average non-wage income that was significantly higher (\$709.88 per month) compared to those who did not report a child with a disability (\$533.97 per month).

Opinions about Welfare Reform in Rhode Island

At the five-year mark, respondents were asked to rate what they thought about welfare reform in Rhode Island. They were given a 3-point scale to rate if welfare reform has been mostly positive, mixed or mostly negative. There was no statistically significant correlation between families with children with disabilities and those without on this item ($p > .30$). The responses from both groups of families were mixed with 40.4 percent reporting a mostly positive rating about Rhode Island's welfare reform (137 out of 339); 45.7 percent saying it was mostly negative (155 out of 339) and 13.9 percent responded with the mixed category (47 out of 339).

Families with children with Developmental Disabilities

A number of statistical tests were conducted looking at each of the separate issues that comprised the “child with disability” variable (i.e. mental health issues, short-term health issues, chronic illness, learning disability, and developmental disability). Surprisingly, these tests yielded no statistically significant differences between families with or without children with mental health issues, short-term health issues, chronic illness or learning disability. However, when the item, “developmental disability” was analyzed separately several statistically significant correlations were found. These statistically significant correlations included: family FIP status at the 5-year mark; stress as a barrier to employment; personal or family problems as a barrier to employment; transportation problems; whether or not they themselves had a learning disability which was a barrier to their work or education; confidence in finding a job; and what they thought about welfare reform in Rhode Island.

Families who reported at least one child with a developmental disability were significantly more likely to have remained on FIP throughout the 5-year period (41% compared to 22.7%; $p<0.01$). These findings are contained in Table 7 on page 7. They were also significantly more likely to be unemployed at the 5-year mark (69.2% compared to 49.2%; $p<0.02$). See Table 8 on page 7.

When those families who were not employed and not involved in a training or education program at the 5-year mark were asked about barriers to their involvement in work, training or education, families with a child with a disability were significantly more likely to report the following barriers (see Tables 9 through 12 on pages 8 to 10):

- ✓ *Too much stress or other mental health problems* (69.6% compared to 42.3%; $p<0.15$)
- ✓ *Personal or family problems* (60.9% compared to 28.9%; $p<0.002$)
- ✓ *Transportation problems* (56.5% compared to 30.3%; $p<0.01$)
- ✓ *Learning disability* (26.1% compared to 6.3%; $p<0.002$).

As can be seen in Table 13 on page 10, families with a developmentally disabled child and who were not employed or in job training at the 5-year mark, were significantly less confident about finding a job than those families who did not have a child with a disability ($p<0.000$).

Lastly, families who reported that at least one of their children had a developmental disability at the 5-year mark were significantly more negative in their rating of welfare reform in Rhode Island than those families who did not have a child with a disability ($p<0.000$). The majority of families with a developmentally disabled child gave Rhode Island’s welfare reform a mostly negative rating (56.8%; 21 out of 37) in comparison to those families who did not have a child with a disability (44.7%; 136 out of 304). See Table 14 on page 10.

Table 7

FIP participation history and FIP status at final interview: Comparison between families with a developmentally disabled child and those without a developmentally disabled child

		DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY		Total
		NO	YES	
FIP status at 5 years after baseline	Stayer: Remained on FIP throughout study	73 22.7%	16 41.0%	89 24.7%
	Cycler: On FIP at final interview; Off FIP at least once	86 26.7%	10 25.6%	96 26.6%
	Leaver: Off FIP at final interview; *	163 50.6%	13 33.3%	176 48.8%
Total		322 100.0%	39 100.0%	361 100.0%

Pearson's R= -.135, p< .010 *may have cycled during period of study

Table 8

Employment Status: Comparison between families with a developmentally disabled child and those without a developmentally disabled child

		DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY		Total
		NO	YES	
Employment Status	Not Employed	164 49.2%	27 69.2%	191 51.3%
	Employed	169 50.8%	12 30.8%	181 48.7%
Total		333 100.0%	39 100.0%	372 100.0%

Pearson's R= -.122, p<.018

Table 9

Stress and other mental health problems as a barrier to employment, education or training: Comparison between families with a developmentally disabled child and those without a developmentally disabled child

		DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY		Total
		NO	YES	
TOO MUCH STRESS/OTHER MH PROB. BARRIER	NO	82 57.7%	7 30.4%	89 53.9%
	YES	60 42.3%	16 69.6%	76 46.1%
Total		142 100.0%	23 100.0%	165 100.0%

Pearson's R=.190, p<.015

Table 10

Personal/family problems as a barrier to employment, education or training: Comparison between families with a developmentally disabled child and those without a developmentally disabled child

		DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY		Total
		NO	YES	
PERSONAL/FAM ILY PROBLEMS	NO	101 71.1%	9 39.1%	110 66.7%
	YES	41 28.9%	14 60.9%	55 33.3%
Total		142 100.0%	23 100.0%	165 100.0%

Pearson's R= .235, p <.002

Table 11

Transportation problems as a barrier to employment or job training: Comparison between families with a developmentally disabled child and those families without a developmentally disabled child

	DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY		Total
	NO	YES	
TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS NO	99	10	109
	69.7%	43.5%	66.1%
YES	43	13	56
	30.3%	56.5%	33.9%
Total	142	23	165
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Pearson's R=.192 p<.014

Table 12

Learning disability as a barrier to employment or job training: Comparison between families with a developmentally disabled child and those families without a developmentally disabled child

	DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY		Total
	NO	YES	
LEARNING DISABILITY NO	133	17	150
	93.7%	73.9%	90.9%
YES	9	6	15
	6.3%	26.1%	9.1%
Total	142	23	165
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Pearson's R=.238, p< .002

Table 13

Levels of confidence about obtaining employment: Comparison between families with a developmentally disabled child and those without a developmentally disabled child

		F3 DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY		Total
		NO	YES	
F3 CONFIDENT IN GETTING A JOB	VERY CONFIDENT	82 52.9%	7 26.9%	89 49.2%
	SOMEWHAT CONFIDENT	47 30.3%	4 15.4%	51 28.2%
	SOMEWHAT DOUBTFUL	11 7.1%	8 30.8%	19 10.5%
	VERY DOUBTFUL	15 9.7%	7 26.9%	22 12.2%
Total		155 100.0%	26 100.0%	181 100.0%

Pearson's R= .286, p<.000

Table 14

Opinion about Welfare Reform in Rhode Island: Comparison between families with a developmentally disabled child and those without a developmentally disabled child

		DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY		Total
		NO	YES	
Opinion About Welfare Reform in Rhode Island	Mostly Positive	129 42.4%	9 24.3%	138 40.5%
	Mostly Negative	136 44.7%	21 56.8%	157 46.0%
	Mixed	39 12.8%	7 18.9%	46 13.5%
Total		304 100.0%	37 100.0%	341 100.0%

Pearson's R= .110, p< .042